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	MAUD	COLLEEN THIBAUDEAU
STORIES	THE SLEIGH RIDE	JOAN STRONG
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northern review

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The Sleigh Ride

Joan Strong

They were so inseparable that people usually spoke of them in the same breath. Carolanmarie. It sounded like the name of one person. People even made jokes about Marie the amazon child and her sawed-off shadow, but no one thought there was anything really strange about their close friendship. They were simply growing up together and everyone supposed they would remain friends for many years.

When Carol was five and Marie was six they began to notice each other on the public beach. At least Carol noticed Marie who stood a head taller than the other children of her age and could run faster and swim farther than any of them. She was always captain of a racing team or the leader of expeditions down the beach to the rocky point where they hunted for crabs and fish among the pools at low tide. Carol used to watch her from a distance, because she was afraid to go into the mob of noisy strangers around Marie. But once Marie brought a bicycle down to the beach and began pumping slowly along the hard wet sand by the water while her mob ran behind her and shouted: "Gimme a ride, Marie!" and "Hey! Me first, Marie!" Instantly Carol thought she wanted a ride more than anything. She trotted down the beach and paddled along behind the crowd, not going too near. Then Marie stood down off her bike and turned, showing her brown face and very white teeth in a quick smile. She heaved the bicycle strongly around and started plowing back the other way, shouting: "Nobody can have a ride today! Not today!"

At that moment she caught sight of Carol standing aside with her fingers in her mouth.

"What's your name?" she called, smiling still more, for Carol's wide stare made Marie swell with terrific pride. "Will you tell me your name?" she called again, taking a step forward to let Carol see the whole bicycle.

"Sandy!" shrieked a little boy. "My name's Sandy and I want a ride!" He ran up and seized the handle bars, but Marie pushed him away.

"Not you!" she said, laughing at him. "I mean that girl, that very little girl over there." She pointed. Carol ducked her head down and muttered her name. The beach felt too wide around her.

"M'name's Carol," she mumbled into her fingers.

"What did you say?" called Marie, frowning and trying to hear. All the children waited, murmuring and stirring among themselves and turning their grinning faces at Carol as if they saw a new sort of crab. Suddenly she didn't want a ride anymore. She crept back a few steps, then scampered away, her straight blond hair bobbing around her face and her legs and arms thrashing against the deep dry sand far above the water. Behind her a sharp wave of laughter broke out, with Marie's laugh soaring loudest of all, for Marie wanted to show off her new pride to the crowd.

After that Carol pretended not to see Marie although she watched her out of the corner of her eye and wished that she could be like her.

But Marie kept wondering who that little girl was. She waited for Carol to come forward again sometime, because she felt very shy about speaking first herself. Carol might run away and never try to come back. Marie even brought her bicycle to the beach every day for a week, and she drove the mob of children away so they wouldn't frighten Carol. But nothing happened.

Then one day Carol was crouching at the water's edge, a blond big-headed gnome perched on the long pale reflections of her legs in

the empty wet sand. Marie suddenly decided to find out what she was doing there by herself. She left her noisy swarm and trotted down the beach, dodging the crowded standing legs of grown-ups and stepping over many oily tan bodies. Carol did not look up when she heard Marie's feet come smacking along the sand. Her slippery Dutch cut hair hid her face like a loose yellow bonnet, and she kept on staring at a starfish that lay upside down on a stone with hundreds of feet squirming into the air. Marie gazed at it, her nose wrinkling.

"Why don't you put him back in the water?" she asked, for the blind crawling of it seemed to tickle her skin.

"I want to see him squirm," answered Carol, gently prodding him straight on the stone. She watched him for a few minutes more, and then, as the groping mass of feet moved more slowly, she lifted him carefully and placed him right side up in the water. Finally Carol looked up with round blue eyes that reminded Marie of the flat blue flowers sewn onto her bedspread with black dots of thread.

"Can you swim?" asked Marie, looking at her small triangle of a mouth. Carol nodded. "Then let's go in," said Marie. "I'll race you to my rubber ball. When I throw it I'll say go, and we'll start." So they waded out side by side, the taller browner one in the orange sunsuit taking great strides against the water, and the little blond gnome of a one hopping along in quick excited jerks.

Marie won the race easily and stood up, triumphantly holding the ball while Carol splashed on stubbornly just the same, lifting her arms high out of the water at each stroke and craning her neck from side to side as if she were almost drowning. To Marie she seemed a poor little alive doll struggling through a mighty ocean. When she finally came to the finish, Marie reached down and helped her stand up.

"That's not the way to swim," she told her. "You have to keep your head down, like this." And she began teaching Carol, holding her by the straps of her sunsuit and trying to do it for her whenever she sputtered and nearly sank from tiredness.

When the lesson was over, Marie peered down into the gasping round face and said: "That's better now." They stood on the sand looking at each other for a minute. Then Marie tried to put her arm

around Carol, but Carol frowned with a puzzled grunt and pulled stiffly away.

"I want to take care of you," said Marie, twisting her fingers together behind her. "Will you be friends with me?" Carol bobbed her head but couldn't think of anything to say.

After that they saw each other nearly every day all summer long. Carol went to Marie's home to skip rope in the yard, and when Marie saw her little brother staggering over the lawn to them, she swung her end of the rope harder and shouted: "Mother! Take Jackie out of the way! We don't want anybody to get in our way!" Then both girls would try to jump into the whipping disc of rope. "One, two, buckle my shoe . . ." But they usually missed and it tangled in their feet. And sometimes Marie went to Carol's house to play in the garden swing, a green metal frame with two wooden seats facing each other across a floor of slats. They took turns being the trolley conductor, standing on the slats and rocking the swing while the passengers got on and off one by one, Marie and Carol being a procession of ladies going shopping and men going to the office and children on their way to school. Marie always swung as hard as she could, and when she was a passenger she brought quarrelsome children and chattering friends with her. But Carol was an old white-haired conductor who had been at it all his life, rocking slowly back and forth. Or she was a silent passenger watching the street glide past outside.

"What are you supposed to be now?" Marie often had to ask.

"Oh," said Carol, "I'm a washerwoman going to do the President's wash."

"Well, I wouldn't have known it," said Marie, "You have to remember to tell me." But Carol kept forgetting because she was busy being the passenger.

During the winter when Carol lived in New York and Marie was in Cambridge, they wrote letters describing what they did in school and what their other friends were like. The margins were filled with pictures of pin-headed figures running, sitting, or standing with arms and legs sticking out in a star shape. They put titles underneath saying: "This is me eating breakfast," or: "This is me being chased by a dog," or, under the sprawled figure: "This is me making an angel in the snow". After a while Carol didn't bother to write any-

thing any more. She just filled pages and pages with pictures, putting in houses and trees and large puffy animals and coloring them with her crayon set. And soon Marie's letter became nothing but questions about the pictures. "Dear Carol. What is that stick with grass growing out of it that you drew in the middle? Is that a mouse running at the bottom?" For Carol had read the story of Black Sambo, and she had drawn a palm tree and a tiger chasing through the letters of her name. She had thought of drawing herself being chased by the tiger, but for some reason she didn't want to. And she forgot to tell Marie what the picture was, because she had drawn it all of a sudden, without thinking, and she was ashamed.

So she started a funny paper for Marie. In every letter Carol filled a whole sheet with square pictures telling the adventures of Terrible Tom, a broad-shouldered black man shaped like a thick capital T who did all sorts of wonderful and awful deeds. He killed bandits, beating them to the side of the page in a scrawly mass, or he rescued the women and children who hung like bunches of limp water-lily buds from the windows of a house that blazed jaggedly with waxy crayon flames. These were good deeds by Terrible Tom. But just as often he was a bandit himself, wearing a red mask over his eyes and riding a prancing pin-legged horse. It all depended on how Carol felt, whether he was good or bad. In either case Marie was so pleased with his adventures that she filled at least half of each letter with excited praise and guesses at what he would do next. She used the other half of every letter to describe what she had done in school, how she had won a composition prize or a badge for citizenship or a blue ribbon for athletics. Marie never boasted to anyone else, but she saved her pride to show like a gold dollar to Carol. And although Carol never wrote how she admired all the prizes, Marie could just see her sitting over those letters with her fingers in her mouth and the dreamy look on her face which she had worn when she had stared at the bicycle on the beach.

Letters kept the two of them more or less together during the winters, but every summer when they returned to the seashore, each one was surprised to see how the other had changed. Marie grew very fast, and it seemed to Carol that Marie towered over her by another foot every time June came around. Carol didn't change much herself, though she lengthened out somewhat, and developed the spindly hungry look of children whose bodies are trying hard to shoot up quickly. But to Marie she was practically a different person every summer, and it always took several days to get used to her.

By the time Carol was twelve, she thought Marie would stop being surprised to find her still small and short. But when they met again on the beach, Marie cried: "You must have shrunk during the winter!" And she gazed down, pitying this thin elf with the knobbly knees and elbows.

"No I didn't," Carol replied. "I grew half an inch and I gained weight too. I look small to you because you're so huge." Then, after looking the tall Marie enviously up and down, she added: "You're simply enormous. Maybe you'll be a giantess some day and the circus will give you a job." Marie threw back her head and let out a great laugh.

"What a silly idea!" she cried. "All right, if I'm a giantess you can be the midget and we'll sit on the same platform, me on a chair and you on my shoulders. And we'll have a sign in front of us saying 'Miss Tallsmall, the big little monster'. Come on, let's put on our suits."

Marie went to the bath-house and forgot the circus idea at once. But Carol pictured herself as a stunted creature sitting on Marie's shoulders, and she dragged on her old bathingsuit. It had fitted her for three years. Her mother bought it extra large, "to allow for growth," she said. Now it hung on Carol like an old, dry, moth-balled skin. She looked wistfully down at herself, then stood on tip-toe and stretched her arms up to see how it would feel to grow out of this ugly, everlasting suit. She was standing that way when Marie's voice sounded right behind her.

"Are you coming?" said Marie, poking her head in the door. Carol dropped her arms, feeling foolish, and pretended to be smoothing down her hair.

"Yes, coming," she said, and followed Marie toward the beach.

Inside of one day Carol had forgotten that she was so small and quiet and different from Marie. She laughed and shouted and swam out to the raft and dove bravely off the high board. She felt like a bold and gay Marie, though only a small-sized copy of the real one.

The next winter Marie's family moved to Vermont where they had bought a farm. In great excitement Marie wrote to Carol, inviting her to spend Christmas vacation up there. Carol ran to the livingroom, waving the letter at her parents. Her eyes shone with a vision of a farmhouse among fat pillows of fields and sleighs jingling through clean frothy snow. Her parents hesitated but finally said: "Well, all right. We'll miss you terribly, but since it's Marie who's asked you . . . " Her mother looked vaguely worried.

"Only you will be careful, won't you?" she said. "Don't get over-tired and don't try anything risky on skis."

"Of course not! Why should I?" laughed Carol, and ran off to answer the letter.

Marie's farm was as much a fairyland as she said it was. A snowstorm had quilted the whole countryside with heavy white, such as Carol had never known. Distant fields were smooth mounds, clear as new china bowls, but when you stepped into them they turned out to be feathery masses which swallowed your legs and arms and tickled your face with weightless cold. The snow was so much cleaner and deeper than the grubby gray patches in Central Park that Carol spent her first afternoon scooping it up in lavish armfuls, packing it into a snowman, then a fort, then a cave. Finally she covered a whole slope with angels made by flopping down on her back and working her arms up and down in wing-like arcs. Marie came up from the barn while she was still at it and stood laughing heartily with her hands on her hips. She felt as though she had made the countryside and the snow herself, for Carol.

"One more!" shouted Carol, and she scrambled up again, stood stiffly with an earnest gaze into space, and then toppled slowly, slowly, until she fell flat on her back and began fanning her arms violently into wings. There she lay for a moment, dizzy with pleasure, and grinned up at Marie whose face appeared over her head, upside down and still laughing.

"Know something? We're going to a square dance tonight," said Marie, "and I'm going to take my skis and ride along behind the sleigh while you drive." Carol simply lay and gazed up at her. It didn't matter what they were going to do. She was here, at Marie's place, and she felt as free and light as a swallow floating down the wind.

"Dead angel!" cried Marie suddenly, her smile oddly upside down. "Or maybe you're a dead body with angel's wings sprouting behind it." She kept staring down, and then added in a slow voice: "You know, when I grow up and this farm belongs to me, you can come and stay her whenever you like. You can live here if you want to. Wouldn't that be fine?"

"Uh-huh," said the dazed Carol, watching that strange turned-over mouth, Marie's mouth which now had a long upper lip and big square lower teeth. Then the snow began to chill through her wet

clothes and she stood up, brushing herself off.

They went upstairs to dress for the dance, and it took them two hours to change because they lolled so long in their steamy baths, and then they had a fashion show, trying on each other's clothes. When they had exhausted Marie's closet and Carol's suitcase and the room was littered with clothes, they put on their dance dresses. Both had yellow dirndls with wide skirts, but Marie's had a red woven belt and a red and green vine embroidered around the hem. She noticed how plain Carol looked, a plain pale face above the yellow bodice and white blouse.

"Here," she said, giving her the red belt. "You take this and I'll wear my white one. I've made wreaths for us to wear on our heads too. We'll be very conspicuous." She took two circlets of red paper flowers out of the bureau and they put them on, standing at the mirror and watching themselves.

"We look terribly nice," said Marie, turning her head to get all angles.

"Yes," murmured Carol looking at the two reflections. Marie was still brown from last summer, like a straight smooth column, but Carol's own reflection looked as much like a picked chicken as ever even though the dress made her feel gay.

That night Carol drove the sleigh to the village while Marie sat beside her and told her what to do. The square dance had already started when they arrived, so they hurriedly tied the horse in a shed and left him with his blanket on, stamping and sneezing after invisible shreds of hay in the corner.

The thud and jig of the music came over the lamplit common from the town hall, and through the open upstairs windows Carol saw shirt-sleeved men, and girls with whirling skirts, marching and circling by twos past the squares of light while the caller's voice sang out over them, blaring when he turned his megaphone towards the windows. Marie took Carol's hand and rushed her into the hall and upstairs. When they paused at the ticket table, Carol pressed her wreath firmly down on her head and peered into the room at the crowd stirred round and round by the drumming tune. A girl with a blank half-smile shuffled past with a shock-haired man who chewed something. He lolled his head back with a dull stare, one arm draped against the girl's waist, and their feet went by with a scraping sound, mixing and mashing the tune against the floor. But suddenly Carol saw the black mouth of the megaphone lifted into the air. "Su-wing your partner!" In a flash the man snapped the girl around and swept her

away, grinning over her head and showing gaps between his long stained teeth. And it shocked and frightened Carol to see him throw her around.

"Leave your coat here if you want," said the woman at the ticket table, sorting piled coins into a cigar box. Carol blushed under the stare from her flat thin-featured face, the dull gleam of small round glasses with points of eyes behind them.

"She must know I'm a stranger here," she whispered to Marie who was pulling her coat off for her.

"It doesn't matter," answered Marie. "That's only Mrs. Pratt. She looks at everybody that way."

Inside, Carol stood against the wall hugging her elbows and asked: "Why do they all look half asleep when they dance?" For all their faces were blank, though their bodies spun around and the men kicked and stamped on the offbeats sometimes.

"It's the music," said Marie. "It thumps so. You'll see."

They joined the next dance, Marie taking the boy's part so that she could guide Carol through the figures. The black mouth lifted again, the woman at the piano crushed out her cigarette and started bouncing her hands on the keys, and the fiddler dragged his bow across the strings. Whenever it was her turn, Carol let Marie push her among the milling people, and between times she saw the caller right above her on the platform, tapping his foot, jerking his shoulder, and singing the calls with his eyes shut while he tipped the megaphone like a bottle against his mouth. Damp black streaks of hair hung over his forehead and his blue shirt stuck to him with long dark patches of sweat. He was lost in the dancing but his band stayed outside of it all. The mountain-huge drummer sat watching the crowd and kept up a rolling and thumping with his sticks which he seemed to have forgotten. And the little brown knot of a woman in trousers pummeled her piano, and the fiddler let his violin hang down from his chin while he scraped away, smiling over the shifting mass of dancers and crawling his fingers up and down on the strings. They made the tune bounce through the room till the dancers swung and eddied in a many-colored sea. Carol's feet tapped and shuffled by themselves, but it was Marie who kept her in the dance. And whenever Marie was separated from her, Carol kept her eyes on the red paper wreath and waited for her, feeling the dull dancer's smile creep over her face and stay there fixed by the endless tune.

But after a few dances Carol began to learn the figures and un-

derstand the half singing language of the caller, and she felt like a real member of the crowd. Now her partner was a lanky boy with thin steely arms who swung her fast and tossed her here and there into place or snatched her off again skilfully. Marie and her partner stood opposite them in the set and when Marie danced into the quadrille Carol watched the bright hem of her skirt swim around, and waited for her own turn to swing that way in answer.

"That your sister?" asked Carol's partner. And when she shook her head he added: "Thought maybe she was. You dress sort of alike and you smile like you were sisters." At that Carol laughed so suddenly that he looked startled. .But he couldn't know that the dance had become a festival for her, a celebration for Carol and Marie, the red-crowned sister queens.

Then before Carol knew it the lights dimmed and the orchestra started playing "Goodnight Ladies." The couples began plodding wearily over the floor in an ordinary waltz.

"Let's get away before the crowd," whispered Marie, and they ran out, snatching their coats in the hall.

"Rusty's liable to be scared of cars," explained Marie, untying the reins and backing the horse out. "But I'm really in a hurry because I want to try this skijoring. That's what they call it in Scandinavia." Even in the dark Carol conld see Marie's white grin. Her short coat flapped open in the cold and the hood hung loose off her bare head, for she was still flushed from the overheated dance hall. As Carol waited for her to guide Rusty straight on the road, the meandering last notes of the waltz came trailing out the dim windows. Then the lights brightened and people began thundering downstairs.

"Quick", said Marie, "we have to hurry or the cars will start up". She pulled on her ski pants, stuffed her dress inside and tied the rope behind the sleigh. Carol climbed up and took the reins, then heard Marie fumbling and panting, then the snap of her ski bindings, a chafing of rope, and her voice in the dark: "All right, go! Not too fast". Carol made Rusty move into a walk, rounding the bend of the road just as the motors began to roar from the town hall drive. Then on the empty blue-white stetch she let him into a trot which started the ambling jingle of bells and the swish of skis in his wake.

"It's wonderful!" cried Marie. You"ll have to try it!"

"Shall I go a little faster?"

"Maybe a little." So Carol let the horse into a fast trot, and the road streamed away like misty water. They seemed to be flying above it or swimming through a foamy surface with Rusty's flanks

churning them along, his hooves drumming fast on the packed snow, the bells shaking a pebbly tune.

"Oh — ha-ha!" Marie's laugh burst into the air. Carol grinned to herself, for suddenly her stomach fluttered with mad, silly excitement.

"Halloo!" she yelled, waving back at the black crouching thing which was Marie.

"Halloo!" shouted Marie, and they made a chant out of it, exchanging signals faster and louder. Finally Carol forgot everything but her wild sense of bursting. She stood up, wobbling on the rocky sleigh, and shouted "Halloo!" at the top of her lungs.

"Look out!" came Marie's sharp cry. Rusty's head jerked up, his trotting feet gathered in a flash, and he broke into a gallop. Carol, thrown down on the seat, clutched madly at the reins. The cold blue night closed down on her suddenly and turned hot. She braced her feet, dragging on the reins that scorched her fingers right through the gloves. The sleigh careened from side to side with a deafening swish of wind and runners, drowning out the slipping of the skis, and the bells rattled crazily.

"Marie!" she shrieked, bowing her head against flying chunks of snow. She couldn't even look around to see if Marie was still there. The sleigh whipped past a lonely farm, over a bridge, and on into a long parade of trees.

"I'm caught! I can't let go!" screamed Marie through the wind. "Stop him—oh Carol!" The sound of her voice made Carol desperately brave. She flung her whole weight on the reins, sawing at his mouth, but his bent neck held stiff against all her strength. His head, pulled sideways, looked ready to snap off, but he galloped on as if chased by the sleigh.

Against the pale sky ahead the road seemed suddenly chopped off. Carol saw the knife edge of it loom, felt the plunge over the top and down into a gulley where a narrow stone bridge appeared in the moonlight. Even before they reached it she heard the clatter and screech of the sleigh on stone as they crashed into the bridge wall. With the same wrench, it seemed, Rusty broke out of his shafts and she heard him go off at an easy, fading canter over the hard snow.

Carol lay still in the road, afraid to move until her head stopped whirling in blinding rings. Then she picked herself up slowly, carefully, and walked to the sleigh which had sluiced around sideways across the bridge.

"Marie?" she said, as if Marie might be there beside her, behind

her. One of the skis lay across the road, the other was nowhere to be seen, but a dark mass lay crumpled against the stone bridge wall. "Marie!" Carol whimpered.

It seemed years before she got over there to her, and then she couldn't make her move or open her eyes. She rubbed her hands, put snow on her face, and tried to lift her, but it was no use. Carol scrambled up, meaning to run somewhere and get someone. But she froze still, touching her forehead with the back of her hand. A pounding and thudding went on in there, filling her ears and aching in her eyes. For a moment she had thought the dance tune came jigging over the long meadows, with the rustling of the crowd in the hall, but it was only that pounding in her head and the wind high in the trees. Then suddenly Carol seemed to wake up. Every branch, every inch of the sleigh and the road stood out at her like giant splinters of glass.

"Marie!" she choked and dropped on her knees. But Marie was utterly still and her face looked old and hollow. Carol's whole body seemed to melt away and she fell in a heap across Marie. Then after a while she began to cry with hardly a sound until a hot wet mask covered her icy face.

The search party found her there, and at first they thought both children had been killed. Later Carol remembered headlights shining into her eyes and people lifting her into a car. She remembered four men bundled up in thick dark jackets pushing the sleigh out of the road, and Marie's red paper wreath lying mashing into the snow, circled there for a second by the white beam of a flashlight. And she remembered a steady whimpering sound in the back seat of the car, like a dog crying.

When they took Carol to the train they said goodbye to her kindly while their eyes kept looking past her with a dull hurt stare, seeing some shadow of Marie beyond her. At home no one asked any questions. In fact they never mentioned Marie for a long time, and when they did they spoke of her as though she were still alive and had gone away for a little while. Then finally they saw the questioning look on Carol's face and they seemed startled, as if she had caught them telling lies.

"I know Marie is dead", she told them, "so why do you act as though she isn't?" For Carol remembered Marie's face as she lay by the wall, and she knew that part of herself had also died. She and Marie together had killed the person everyone called Carolanmarie. And she continued to think so for a long time.

But gradually the idea of that double person faded away, and she thought of Marie entirely separate from herself. In the summer when Carol went to the seashore, people spoke to her as if she were much older than before, though it was only a year since they had seen her. "She's growing up," they said to her mother, and when Carol heard about it she smiled absent-mindedly, not caring as she used to. She even stopped thinking much about Marie after a while because she was too busy with her own life and Marie was put away forever into her memory. But once when she lay on the beach she happened to glance down at the flowered print of her new bathingsuit. The red and yellow pattern reminded her of Marie at the square dance, and the red paper wreaths they had worn. And when Carol shut her eyes she saw herself as the gigantic Terrible Tom she used to draw, raising a small Marie overhead and hurling her down, again and again, until bloody wreaths spread all around. Instantly an icy chill cut through Carol and she bit her hand to make it stop, as she did to awaken herself out of nightmares. Then she rolled over on the sand, and the feeling passed as the strong quieting sun seeped through her back.

Allan Harrison

Paul Dumas

Allan Harrison was once rated a "Sunday painter". This opinion is but partly correct, and then only from a circumstantial point of view. Harrison admits more willingly than most of his fellow artists that it is barely possible for a painter to earn a living in this country unless he shifts to teaching, advertising or fashion-designing. He has therefore entered the field of commercial art in which he has established himself as one of our few progressive minds—together with Bonin, Eveleigh, and Fainmel—and he has become a "leisure painter" rather than a "Sunday painter", forced to practise his art only in his spare moments. Nevertheless his first love remains painting and if his output has been necessarily curtailed, at least he has kept his freedom to express himself without ever yielding to the fashions of the art world or to the traditionally bad taste of the public.

Allan Harrison was born in Montreal in 1911. He has studied in his home-town with John Lyman, to whom he owes a great deal, and in New York at the Arts Students League where he received advice from the French-Mexican painter, Jean Charlot. He has travelled a good deal, to England, to France, to Brazil, and recently to France again and to Italy where he became acquainted in Rome with the famed young avant-garde painter, Renato Guttuso. This much-travelled artist has learned a good deal from his peregrinations, and first of all a sense of the relativeness of his own importance, which is not so common among the artists of a remote and new country like ours. From the many countries he has visited he has brought back sketches—a few of which are reproduced in these pages—broadly brushed, in which we discover that whatever the surrounding or the motive, the painter always succeeds in remaining himself, with the

peculiarities of his formal style and the emotions and moods of his inner self.

Apart from the appreciation of his expert draughtsmanship and of the fluidity of his coloring, a summary analysis of Allan Harrison's work enables us to stress an impression that we have had for some time. Harrison exemplifies in his work the dilemma of modern man: a love of life tainted with a sense of doom. His choice of delicate pigments and his preference for well- polished form reveal a deep craving for happiness and harmony; yet the oblique light he sheds on his imaginary world, a light that casts sinister though velvety shadows on his empty landscapes, creates an aura of inescapable tragedy, as if light were about to fail the universe—as happens at the onset of a solar eclipse — or as if an imminent cataclysm were about to engulf all nature.

A remembrance of the frailty of beauty: such appears to us the personal message of Allan Harrison's painting.

THE LOUVRE, PARIS, 1938. OIL

HOUSE IN BOTAFOGO, RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, 1947. WATER COLOUR

ARLES, FRANCE, 1938. PEN DRAWING

The Snake Machine

John Sutherland

. . . But I see
Only an old snake shedding an old skin.
—L. A. MacKay

Since poetry already is what it is still becoming,
A trick that is done with metaphors for the sake of mirrors,
Allow me to hold this mirror-metaphor up to it.
Suppose, in this machine age, someone invented
A fine machine, which, though soon hopelessly out-dated,
And proven of no value in any practical sense,
Was nevertheless perfectly constructed to allow,
Not just on a single day in the spring or fall
And not just once but a hundred times a minute, swiftly
As the river of wheat flows through the turning mill,
A snake to shed its skins. It looks real, but it is not
Real at all, and it is not, really, anything at all
Because it never was, and probably never will be, invented.
It is only a good facsimile
Of a multitudinous snake whose tin belly ripples and shines
And whose fangs swift as wings bite, unfeeling, as they fly.
It represents this snake which, though incessantly moving, never moves,
But like a succession of swift gray waves
That rise very rapidly and leave one another far behind
There, where the water is shallow, and there is nowhere to go,
It is moving, but always moving in the same place,
Shedding an old skin with each rippling motion
And becoming a new snake exactly like the old one.
To put it in a language that everyone will understand,
Poetry which leaves behind it a trail of shed skins
Proves plurality, but leaves the existence of unity
Uncertain as piecing together the scattered bones of Christ
If anyone ever found them. It is curious how it suggests

Colors like sparks flying off from a rotating wheel,
And how, later, all that the mind can recall of it
Is always one colour, the gray colour of a snake
Urging forward and up through a lava that hides
Like a hood its invisible eyes and head and clings
Like the veil of a bride to its invisible body.
In fact, there are many times when it really does look
Like a real snake. Sometimes you would almost suppose
That it was a giant cobra and that, writhing in its belly,
There lay a grown man, perhaps the poet himself,
Who, being swallowed from head to foot,
And all tangled in the snake's digestive processes,
Wished, with the frantic prodding and poking about of a limb,
To find a small hole for self-expression.
Maybe that is not so. Maybe the thickness of the skin
Proves the man's need for privacy. If what he is trying to do
Is to die, as fast as possible, into the womb, any womb at all,
Then he will enjoy being swallowed and worried like a sausage,
And even the pains of being unborn, although of course
They are very terrible, and still worse than being born,
Because now everything is wrong, even the direction.
But these are only images and do not say what I really mean.
Sometimes it will raise its head, and open its mouth, as if
Ready to cough, but of course it can never cough
Because it is very dry, O dry and sterile all through,
And you would need a good imagination to know
That once it was capable of sound, not sound's negation,
And that once when it opened its jaws like that,
Sharp as the moon's rays a light came forth.
So when it is no longer capable of light or of sound,
Perhaps it is fortunate that it has one quality
Which, though possessed by every machine, in its case is bound to be fatal.
Once started, it cannot stop of its own volition. As long
As its parts are intact and it can work at all,
It must produce and produce and can never pause to rest
Even for a minute. It must still keep reproducing
The snake whose unreal rippling is like guilt and repentance,
Whose color is like a fever of guilt and repentance,
And still, propelled by a whirlpool of infinite self-love,
Keep lavishing all of its motion upon itself.
O for a real snake shedding a real skin!

Two Poems

Irving Layton

MUSIC FOR TWO PIANOS

I can always guess darling.

Like dark keyslots
Your yellow-tipped pupils are closed against me;
And you haven't flattered me once all morning.
Your face is a porcelain cup so finely flawed
That for detection I hold it close
And lovingly turn it about in my hand. . . .
O don't look so furious, pet!
It's exquisite porcelain. . . .blue-veined and rare.

No ?

Well, don't worry your pretty head about it.
Don't worry about it for a single minute.
I know at least twenty good abortionists in this city.

You could practise putting on some weight, though.
I'm getting calluses on my arms and legs.

My pet. . . .what does it betoken?
This lamb's tail on your adorable behind,
So white and sportive.
No? — No! No! No! You crackbrained. . . .
What! Do you believe in primitive magic!

WOMAN IN THE SQUARE

The benches stain and blister in the sun.
The many ignorant pigeons all day long
Compliment the stone-deaf poet, wheel for crumbs;
And the matter-of-fact horses wait
For their load of usual gawks,
Drag at the gutter to no purpose.

Across this important street
She pauses under the awning to examine her white glove.
It is hard to believe she ever ate green things:
Celery, lettuce, or the stems of young onions;
Or that she ever knew love.
It is hard to believe flowers grow for her
In the same innocent way they do for others.
Her perfume is wasted on the incurious tramps
And on the stone-deaf poet
Who once wrote a beautiful poem to a louse.
There's authority in her bladelike body
And in the creamjar face:
Her arm dismissing the bellhop
Has the secret of power in it
Like the Pope's agent at the Bourse.
Frowning however she seems
Suddenly in the sun's hot pallor
A female chimpanzee on whom diamonds glitter
Like the lascivious eyes of young boys.

She has made the day trivial.
The painted evening in mauve and pink
Slides, a furtive homosexual,
Around the enormous thighs
Of the tall puritanical trees.

Film

Guy Glover

IS THERE A WITCH-DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

A quarter of a century ago, an American-born Canadian-trained explorer came out of the Arctic with several thousand feet of exposed movie film. He proceeded to make a moving picture which he called "Nanook of the North". It was "the simple story of an Eskimo family and its fight for food, but its approach to the whole question of film making was something entirely novel at the time it was made. It was a record of everyday life so selective in its detail and sequence, so intimate in its 'shots', and so appreciative of the nuances of common feeling, that it was a drama in many ways more telling than anything that had come out of the manufactured sets of of Hollywood." *

Writing about another film by the maker of "Nanook", and including the latter in his remarks, a certain John Grierson first made use of the term "documentary" to describe those films which record or interpret reality. Grierson was later to become the most persistent advocate of this type of film as an educational and informational medium, and during the next twenty or so years the documentary film played an important part in the history and development of the motion picture. The name of the man who made "Nanook of the North", the first great "documentary" was Robert Flaherty.

Since "Nanook," (1922), Flaherty has made a sparse series of films, and has established himself as one of the masters of the cinematic art: "Moana" (1926), "Tabu" (1931, in collaboration with Murnau), "Industrial Britain" (1933), ("Man of Aran" (1934), and "Elephant Boy" (1936). With the latter film Flaherty had come rather close to the "commercial" film feature, and, dissatisfied with the result, he shook the dust of the studios from his feet, and returned to the United States. For the next ten years he worked on a number of film ventures of varying degrees of obscurity, and it was not, in fact, until 1946 that he was able to launch another production in the

*John Grierson: "Cinema Quarterly" No.1, pp.13-14.

style he has made his own. "Louisiana Story" was completed finally in June, 1948.

Flaherty has found the images that excited him most among the peoples of primitive or near-primitive societies. The Arctic, the South Seas, the Western Isles, rural India and more recently the bayous of Louisiana, have been his exotic stamping-grounds. A very witch-doctor, he has retired to these far-off places there to tread out his magic dance for the exorcising of devils. How else describe a man who speaks to you in the wordless language of visual metaphor, who commands your heart and muscles first and only perhaps then your mind, who utters a few powerful incantations, and those over and over again? There is certainly magic in Flaherty's work, and obsessive power emanating from some deep and maybe tragic spring; and it is this magic, this poetry, that distinguishes him and makes him unique in the film world.

It has been a mistake to suppose, as many have, that Flaherty's technical gifts—the incantatory beauty of his camera-work; the subtle observation and selection of detail; the slow beat of his cutting-rhythms; the deceptively simple structure—are used to expose the documentary reality of "man against the sky" in a primitive habitat For although Flaherty has studied and recorded with affectionate care his exotic societies, these are not so much his subject matter as they are the framework against which the subject matter can be demonstrated.

I would suggest that this subject matter is not that piece of neo- Rousseauism, with which Flaherty has often enough been taxed, of Man happier and better-off in a primitive society where the individual meets reality in a struggle of "natural" scale. Flaherty's subject matter—at once simple and more baffling—is the concept that the irrational, the magical, the poetic foundations of human nature are extremely important, especially in an age when the rational and scientific superstructures are rising to heaven-scraping proportions. This is a sufficiently familiar idea by now, and nobody (least of all Flaherty himself, I suspect) is going to claim uniqueness for it; but it has rarely been dealt with in moving pictures.

In projecting this subject matter, Flaherty has gone (as I have already mentioned) to primitive societies for his images. There, beyond the technological pale, he has been able to find magic at work. He has not, however, spent the best part of his life merely photographing primitive rituals, like some monstrous offspring of Fitzpatrick and Margaret Mead. Flaherty is not a photographer but a weaver

of spells.

"Louisiana Story" was financed by a well-known oil company (as Nanook had been by a fur company), presumably as part of its public relations program; but the company's name is neither mentioned on the sound track nor does it appear visually, and the "oil reference", although integral, is somewhat oblique. Such high-minded non-interference on the part of the sponsor alone makes the film remarkable. "Louisiana Story" is like the average feature film in length only. It tells its story by principally visual means; that is to say, it has only two sentences of commentary (spoken by Flaherty himself) and a few patches of simple dialogue. There are sound effects, of course, and music. The musical score is by Virgil Thompson.

The "story", written by Flaherty, was based on his first-hand observation of an Acadian French family living in back-country Louisiana:

Alexander Napoleon Ulysses Latour, aged about thirteen, lives with his father and mother in a small house on the edge of the bayou. He has grown up close to the lore of this amphibious land and knows where the mermaids lurk and the the alligator builds her nest. At his belt is hung a small bag of salt to help him deal with the forces of nature; he knows he must spit on his hook to catch the biggest fish; and inside his shirt he carries a seldom-used and carefully guarded amulet which he shows to nobody. Alexander has a pet racoon, named Jojo, his inseparable companion. They go often in a shallow boat on voyages of discovery into the shadowy tunnels of the bayou forest.

This idyllic existence is interrupted by the first blasting of an oil company which has leased a piece of the Latour property in order to drill for oil.

The boy is half frightened, half fascinated by the noise of the great machines and by the strange architecture of the rising derrick. The men working on the project make friends with him, and he shows them how to catch big fish by spitting on the bait.

The work goes on, a new element in the boy's life.

One day he sets off on one of his trips, taking Jojo along with him. Far along the twisting waterway he ties his boat up, leaving Jojo in it, and on foot penetrates deep into the jungle. He finds an alligator nest and is digging out the eggs when he is driven away by a ferocious female alligator. Returning at length to his boat, he finds that Jojo has disappeared and cannot be found anywhere. He is des-

olate. He notices an alligator skulking in the water and suspects it of having eaten his pet.

He goes away, but returns with rope, heavy hook and bait (which he spits on), and gets one of the huge reptiles on his line. There is a great struggle in which the boy is bested. He is only saved from drowning by the lucky arrival of his father.

The oil project, working night and day, eventually makes a strike—but, instead of the precious oil, the well blows gas and water. The company stops work and considers abandoning the well as a failure. This would mean a loss to the boy's father.

Alexander pays a visit to the well. He crawls over the silent, deserted machinery, and comes to the drilling tube. He shakes his magic salt into the hole, and then spits down it. Finally, to clinch matters he reveals his most secret charm—a live frog which he carries inside his shirt next his heart. He strokes the frog and silently invokes its help. His little ritual ended, he steals away unobserved.

The oil company decides to give the well one more try. Work recommences. They strike oil.

In the end we see the father handing out gifts. With the money he has received from the oil company, he has bought a shining aluminium coffee pot and a length of dress-material for his wife, and for his son a new rifle. The boy goes out to try it and finds his long-lost pet up in a tree. The pals are reunited.

The boy and the racoon watch the drilling crew as they go away on the huge scow and dredger. As he waves goodbye to them, Alexander Napoleon Ulysses Latour spits in the water and smiles.

That is the story, but Flaherty's picture is more than that. Flaherty makes little use of the "dramatic" and in fact time and again throws away such dramatic possibilities as the story provides. He does this apparently deliberately, for he is interested in other things. "Louisiana Story" is notable for its exquisite photography of the bayous with their flickering twilight, rippling dark waters and translucent semi-tropical foliage. In the boy, Alexander, Flaherty has developed a delightful symbol of innocence and magic. The animals, birds and reptiles are filmed with grace and humour. The soft Acadian French tongue adds a fresh charm to the dialogue . . . but it is impossible to describe the many superb scenes and details of this film without falling into bad prose poetry. Of all films, this one must be not talked about but seen.

And when you see it, you should remember that "Louisiana

Story's" recording of an unfamiliar life and land is secondary. First and foremost it is Robert Flaherty literally making magic, shaking his salt down the well of our subconscious. The old witch-doctor is at it again.

Maud

Colleen Thibaudeau

I seesawsee the apple tree.
Can Maud come out and play with me?
Under the orchard's lightning shape
I dig a grave for my truelove's sake,
Where has that lightning struck? that I may know
And never touch a single bough.

I skipscotchskip.
Maud has a mouth like a red tulip.
In the winedark vineyard of purple grape
I brew a poison for my truelove's sake,
And when it mocks she drinks it low
Then I felicity will know.

Maud Maud Maud Maud.
O have you seen the teetertotter Peter Piper picked?
God sees all,
In the eternal now his thoughts are thick as blossoms, fall like snow
Sees the appletree threnody,
Wry winters when the mayqueen is a green and gruesome skeleton
still heard
Banging its bones to the tree like a scarebird.

I seesawsee the appletree.
Can Maud come out and play with me?
In the fruit-tree's serpent shape
I knot a rope for my truelove's sake,
When she is hanged above the sinful ground
Then it were paradise enow.

Reviews

CANTABILE*

De litteris, et de armis, praestantibusque ingeniis

And when they brought him back
the fibbiest fabricator of them all
il miglior fabbro
they didn't know what to do with him
at the customs he had had nothing to declare
saving and except a number of synonyms, to wit:
zhid, sheeny, jewboy, youpin, kike, yitt, shweef.
and the ballad

But bye and rade the Black Douglas
And wow but he was rough!
For he pulled up the bonny brier
And flang't in St. Mary's Lough.

didn't know what to do with him . . . hang him?
old, *exhaussé*, a poet, there was a question of ethics, moreover
one kuddent make a martyr of him, cood one?
St. Ezra Benedict

So the seven psychiatrists feigned insanity
committed him.

U S U R A: that his offence
that he sought to extract an exorbitant interest
from a limited talent.
speculated in the culture exchanges
passed off
χρύσω χρυσοτέρα
the Dante coinage, Provencal, Chinese yen
not as his own, but his for increment.

**The Cantos of Ezra Pound I-LXXX*. New Directions, New York. $5.00

It must be admitted, however, that as a pawnbroker
he was distinguished.
He invented a new way to ring a coin on the table
was expert in the bite for counterfeit,
trafficked only in the best mdse. and to his friends gave discounts
for the rest was fierce, bearded like the pard, like his Jew.

Pound Libra £

USURA

The cantos? 'The art of conversation' said Tate (Allen) meaning
small talk shouted.
80 of them 80
anecdote, persiflage, ideogram, traduction
traductore—traditore
all to the same if any effect—the syphilisation of our gonorera
and Pound its thunder clap,
a good role but the wrong actor.

Don't you think said the lady from Idaho on tour at Rapallo
that he will be remembered? Yes
As the author of a Gradus ad parnassum
" a compiler of several don'ts
" a perpetrator of ditto
" a dropper-down of learning's crumbs
and as the stoic of the empty portals.

Otherwise, as Jimmy, quoting himself and poor Mr. Breen
E.P.: E P
'EP. *Est Perditus.*

A. M. Klein

A Little Treasury of American Poetry, edited with an introduction by Oscar Williams. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1948.

Mr. Oscar Williams' latest anthology might well provide opportunity for making some timely remarks on the development and present status of American poetry. In taking notice of his book, however, I do not propose to do this. I will attempt merely to expose Mr. Williams himself. For an American poet writing in an American publication, such a task would be dangerous indeed, since Mr. Williams has had ways of dealing with past rebukes from his fellows. He has simply not included them in his anthologies or, if he has already done so in editions prior to the adverse remarks, he has removed them from later editions. But since I am neither American nor a professional poet and this is a non-American publication, I shall not feel beset, in what I have to say, by fear of being black-balled in the above manner.

"A Little Treasury of American Poetry" contains, collected for the first time between two convenient covers, much of the best poetry of which those United States can boast. By persistence and leg-work over the years Mr. Williams has built up a strong position with his publisher, and he has been permitted to budget this anthology handsomely. This shows especially in the inclusion of the complete long poems of Whitman, Eliot, Pound, etc. Make no mistake about it, Mr. Williams, in terms of quantity, gives you your money's worth.

"A Little Treasury" is divided into three sections: Part I, "American Indian Poetry"; Part II, "The Chief Poets from Colonial Times to the Present Day" (the longest and forming the bulk of the book); and Part III, "Poetry of the Forties". The last contains mostly work "of younger or less well-known poets" and it is to be taken "not as the complete story of our decade", as Mr. Williams might well warn us. It is in this section, the compilation of which might try the taste and knowledge of even the most scrupulously just anthologist, that Mr. W. makes his most unlovely and unloveable showing. In it the prejudices of a poet-become-anthologist are only too clearly rampant. This must be pointed out, since it makes the section quite useless as even a cursory glimpse of the period. In glancing at the poetry of the forties one does not omit the work of such poets as Randall Jarrell, Howard Nemerov, Weldon Kees, Dudley Fitts (to mention a few that come to mind) while including the writings of such as Richard Wilbur, Edward Weismiller, Brewster Ghiselin, William Abrahams (and a

number of others). I have nothing personal against the latter group (which is more, I fear, than Mr. Williams can say of the former); I wish merely to indicate the sort of anthologist we have up for inspection.

Part I, devoted to "Amerindian" poetry is just one of Mr. Williams' little novelties. The poems themselves are picturesque and interesting, but Mr. Williams does not make a strong case for including them in this volume.

Part II contains the anthologist's most reasonable work (although here, as in Part III, there are fishy omissions). It is in this section that one finds, in their entirety, Hart Crane's "The Bridge", Eliot's "Ash Wednesday" and "The Waste Land", Pound's "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley", Wallace Stevens' "The Man with the Blue Guitar", Whitman's "Song of Myself"—as well as numerous other poems by each of these and other poets.

In this illustrious pantheon Mr. Williams, of course, does not neglect to enshrine himself, giving an ample selection of his verses. By this act of self-canonization, the anthologist seeks, apparently, to be but completely complete, in the face of all possible ridicule. This is a risk which a poet of Mr. Williams' quality should not lightly take.

The Introduction, a fairly long prose dissertation written specially for this book by Mr. Williams, mixes sense (usually someone else's) and nonsense (very much his own) in the proportion of one to three (approximately).

The chief critical disclosure of the Introduction is that "if American poets can utilize tradition as they have of late learned to do, and at the same time risk an absolute originality, as did Whitman", "the appearance of our Shakespeare may not be far off". No evidence in support of this prophecy is offered much more relevant than: "New York is already the political world capital, it tends to become the literary world capital." (Mr. Williams composes his sentence thus.)

A marginal issue dealt with feverishly by Mr. Williams is the question of education and the literary man. Mr. W., for reasons which are becoming more apparent as, year by year, his prose pieces become longer, plumps for not too much learning in the poet. This part of the Introduction contains some gems of which the following is but one: "Some genius, unfortunate in being confined to hints and glimpses of ideas, to fragments of learning, can substitute appetite and digestion for taste, and nourish its concepts to completion in its own bowels." Which is where, doubtless, Mr. Williams nourished to completion his own "concept" of the imminence of the arrival of the

American Shakespeare, and other of his cranky notions.

In the midst of the kind of thing I have been quoting is the statement: "But just as the drawbacks of partial ignorance can be compensated for by genius, so too, can mediocrity be confounded by too much reading." One half of that would surely make a fitting epitaph for Mr. Williams himself; for just as certainly as he will never die of shame, so will a surfeit of erudition never kill the most successful anthologist the United States have so far produced.

Guy Glover

Contributors

PAUL DUMAS, student and critic of Canadian painting, practises medicine in Montreal.

GUY GLOVER works in New York with The World Today, film organization headed by John Grierson.

A. M. KLEIN, the well-known Canadian poet, has just published a new collection of his poetry, "The Rocking Chair and Other Poems".

IRVING LAYTON is the author of "Here and Now", and of "Now Is The Place", the book of his poems and short stories recently published by the First Statement Press.

JOAN STRONG, who lives in Stanford, California, has published previously in "Chimera".

COLLEEN THIBAUDEAU is a young poet whose poems have also appeared in Contemporary Verse and the magazine Here and Now.

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. . . line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little, with stammering lips and another tongue we will speak to this people.

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